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December 13, 2010

Dear Planning Commission Representative:

The Coalition of Austin Community Gardens (CACG), is the voice of community gardeners in Austin, and our mission is to promote and support new and existing community gardens in the Austin area. We would like to offer strong support for two pending actions to be carried out in fulfillment of City Council Resolution 20091119-065, passed in November 2009.

First, we urge the Planning Commission to support the expedient creation of a full-time Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coordinator position on City staff. There is a high demand for additional space to grow food at community gardens in Austin, and while City staff has taken the first steps toward establishing an effective system for creating and managing new community gardens in Austin, a staff person dedicated to this effort will be vital to the successful implementation of this system.

Second, we wish to express our support for the passage of the City Code Ordinance repealing Chapter 8-4, replacing Chapter 14-7 and amending Chapter 14-11 to the City Code relating to sustainable urban agriculture. The proposed code changes would establish a clearer permitting process for creating community gardens on City land, would make it easier and more affordable for community gardens on City and private land to install water infrastructure, and would remove the existing geographic restriction on which community gardens can receive the City's designation. The proposed City-Supported Community Garden designation is a substantial improvement over the current Qualified Community Garden designation.

Community gardens are an essential part of a vibrant, livable, and sustainable city. They increase food security and reduce the risk of obesity and diet-related disease by providing space for residents to grow their own nutritious, affordable food and by encouraging exercise. They help to unite neighborhoods, contribute to neighborhood beautification, and connect urban dwellers with nature. They facilitate communication, foster intergenerational and cross-cultural connections, encourage physical activity and provide therapeutic benefits. The demand for space in community gardens is only growing, so we urge you to help gardens proliferate in Austin, and thus make Austin the community garden-friendly city it should be.

Sincerely,

The Coalition of Austin Community Gardens
www.communitygardensaustin.org

Participating gardens include:

Alamo Community Garden
Blackshear Community Garden
Clarksville Community Garden
Festival Beach Community Garden
Deep Eddy Community Garden
Good Soil Community Garden

Homewood Heights Community Garden
Hyde Park Community Garden
South Austin Community Garden
Sunshine Community Garden
Windsor Park Community Garden

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